DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 367 076 EC 302 777

TITLE	Statistical Profile of Special Education in the United States, 1994.
INSTITUTION	Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, Va.
REPORT NO	ISSN-0040-0599
PUB DATE	Jan 94
NOTE	5p.
PUB TYPE	Statistical Data (110) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT	Teaching Exceptional Children; v26 n3 suppl Jan 1994
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Age Differences; Delivery Systems; *Disabilities; Dropout Rate; *Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; Expenditures; High School Graduates; Incidence; Personnel Needs; School Demography; *Special Education; *Student Characteristics; *Student Placement; Teacher Supply and Demand; Trend Analysis

ABSTRACT

This journal supplement provides graphs, tables, and narrative to summarize the current status of special education in the United States. The information is based on data from the following sources: "The 15th Annual Report to the Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act"; "The 1990 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey"; "The National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students"; and "Patterns in Special Education Delivery and Cost." Information presented includes: number of students with disabilities receiving special education services by age; disabilities of students receiving special education as a percentage of all students; percentage of students receiving special education services; demographic differences between secondary youth with disabilities and the general population; special education students in the school building and other sites; special education students served in the general classroom and other service modalities; special education teachers employed and needed; personnel other than special education teachers employed and needed; school completion and school leaving; expenditures on special education; factors influencing completing or dropping out; what happens after school; and projected 1990 racial/ethnic breakdown of students receiving special education by category. (DB)

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Statistical Profile of Special Education in the United States, 1994

ED 367 076

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Over the past years a number of national studies and reports have attempted to provide a clearer picture of the state of special education for students with disabilities. Who is being served, what does it take to serve them and what are the outcomes of this effort? This document was developed to present an accurate profile of these findings. It is based primarily on the most current data from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, *15th Annual Report to the Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act* and the Office of the Civil Rights' *1990 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey*, the *National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students (NLTS)*, and *Patterns in Special Education Delivery and Cost*.

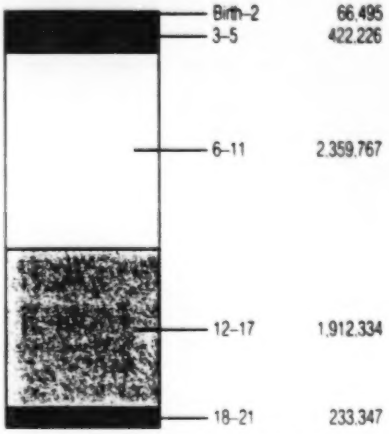
In this period of great debate about education in general and special education specifically, data are being presented and interpreted to support various points of view. This is occurring in the professional literature and the general media. For many professionals and the public it is increasingly difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. The consequence is often inaccurate perceptions about the state of special education for students with disabilities as well as inappropriate decision making. We hope that the following facts concerning the education of students with disabilities will better inform you so you can better inform others.

George E. Ayers
Executive Director

Who is being served in special education?

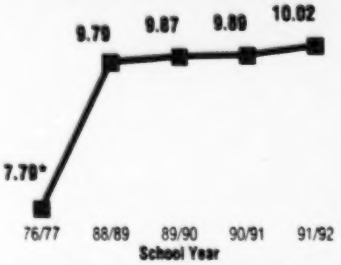
Students with Disabilities Receiving Special Education Services by Age

4,994,169 Students Served
(School year 1991-'92)



Source: 15th Annual Report to Congress, 1993.

Percentage of Students Ages 6–17 Receiving Special Education Services

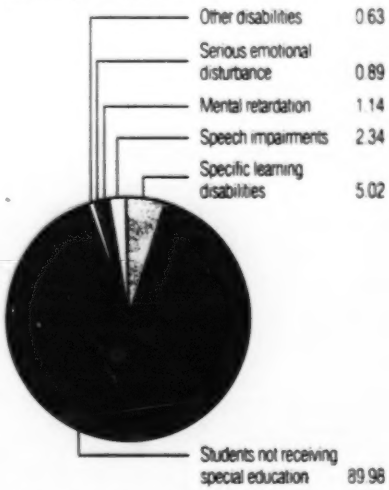


*Data for 1976–77 do not include students served in state-supported schools and programs.

Source: Annual Reports to Congress 1978, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993.

Disabilities of Students Ages 6–17 Receiving Special Education as a Percentage of All Students Ages 6–17

(School year 1991-'92)



Source: 15th Annual Report to Congress, 1993.

Demographic Differences Between Secondary School Youth with Disabilities and the General Population of Youth

(School year 1985-'86)

Source: SRI International, 1993.

(This section continues on page 4.)

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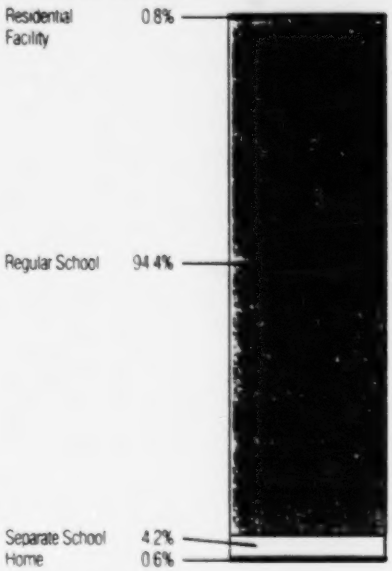
Where are students in special education being served?

Special Education Students in the School Building and Other Sites

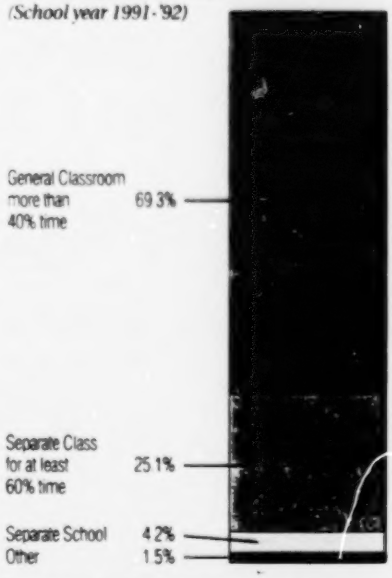
4,994,169 Students Served
(School year 1991-'92)



Source: 15th Annual Report to Congress, 1993.

Special Education Students Served in the General Classroom and Other Service Modalities

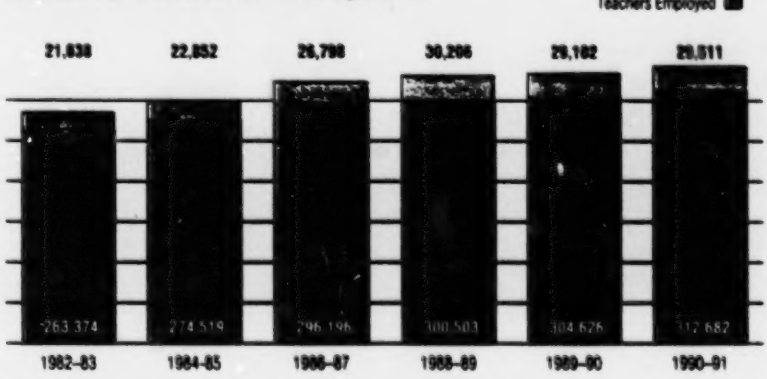
4,994,169 Students Served
(School year 1991-'92)



Source: 15th Annual Report to Congress, 1993.

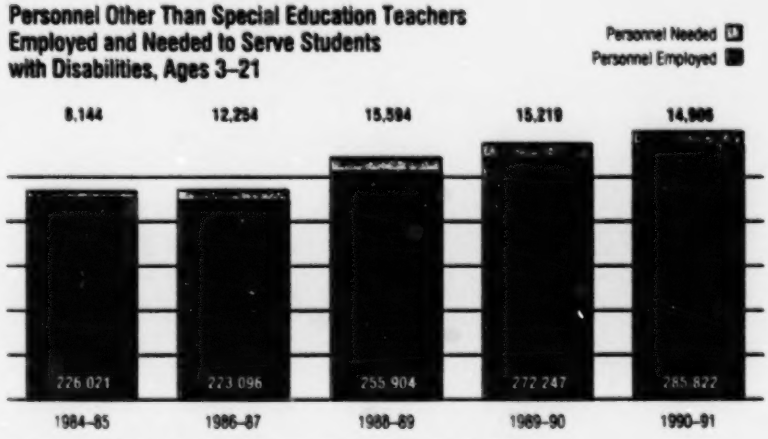
Who is providing special education benefits?

Special Education Teachers Employed and Needed to Serve Students with Disabilities, Ages 3–21



Source: 6th, 8th, 10th, 12th, 13th, 14th Annual Reports to Congress, 1984–1992.

Personnel Other Than Special Education Teachers Employed and Needed to Serve Students with Disabilities, Ages 3–21



Source: 8th, 10th, 12th, 13th, 14th Annual Reports to Congress, 1986–1992.

■ Of the 608,504 personnel employed to provide for the education of students with disabilities, only 17,373 (2.9%) are local supervisors or administrators.

■ The average teacher/pupil ratio in self-contained programs ranges from 1:13 for learning disabilities programs to 1:4 for programs serving students with hearing impairments, with an average ratio and average class size of 9 students.

■ The average caseload for resource programs is 26 students, ranging from 10 students in mental retardation and visual impairment programs to 50 in programs for students with speech/language disabilities.

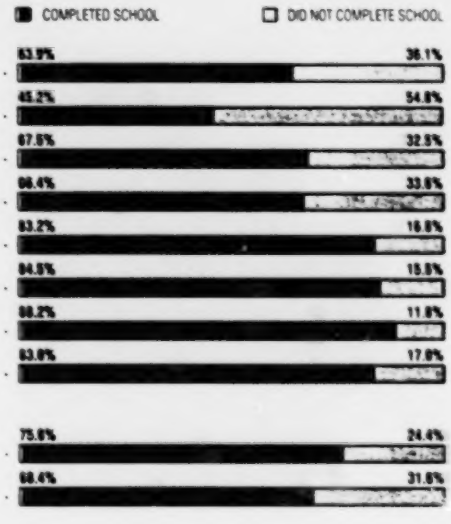
■ Compared to general education teachers, special education teachers are statistically more likely to be female, younger, unmarried, have fewer years of teaching experience, and have earned a master's degree.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

■ Of 45 teaching areas, the four with the highest need and most considerable shortage are special education areas: Multiple Disabilities, Emotional/Behavioral Disorders, Learning Disabilities, and Speech Pathology/Audiology.

Source: Haselkorn and Calkins, 1993.

Who completes school and who leaves?



Source: Wagner, 1991.

Factors Influencing Completing or Dropping Out

- Only 5% of students who were absent 10 days or less dropped out.
- Over 10% of students who were absent 21 to 30 days dropped out.
- Almost 27% of those absent more than 30 days dropped out.
- Students who failed one or more courses dropped out at a rate of 17%; those who passed all their courses had a dropout rate of almost 6%.
- Students with high absenteeism and those who fail a class do not often develop a social bond with their schools, or identify their classes as relevant or interesting.
- Students with disabilities who received job-specific vocational education performed better in school and at work than those who did not, had significantly lower absenteeism, and were significantly less likely than others to have dropped out of school.
- Students who received individual attention such as tutoring or counseling were more likely to stay in school.
- Students who socialized with other students outside of school and were involved in extracurricular activities were less likely to fail a course, miss school, or drop out.
- Smaller classes, tutoring, and other services increased the chances that students with disabilities would succeed in general classes.
- Students with disabilities in general classes were less likely to have high absenteeism or to be retained in grade if classes were small or if they had help from an instructional aide.
- Students with more serious disabilities were often "encouraged" by school administrators to drop out.

Source: Wagner, 1991.

How much is spent on special education?

While no data are collected on the total amount of money expended to educate students with disabilities, it is possible to estimate. In 1990–91 the average cost of education in the U.S. was $5,266 per student. On average, the public spends 2.3 times this amount on students with disabilities. For a student with disabilities, it is estimated that an additional $6,845.80 was spent. In 1990-91, 4.8 million students with disabilities received special education for a total additional cost of $32.86 billion.

Where does the money go?

	General Education	Special Education
Instruction	54%	62%
Support Services/Administration	35%	11%
Transportation	8%	4%
Related Services	—	10%
Public Services	3%	—
Assessment	—	13%

Source: Moore, 1988.

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*This document reports data from NLTS.

What happens after school?

The National Longitudinal Transition Study found that postschool outcomes are better for youth who have completed secondary school, taken vocational education while in school, spent more time in general education classes, and belonged to school or community groups. Outcomes were better for youth who had a transition plan in high school that specified a postschool outcome, such as employment, and for youth whose parents expected them to succeed and who were involved in their schooling.

Postsecondary Education

- In 1988, 7% of first-time, full-time college freshmen were students with disabilities. By 1991, this number had risen to 8.8% (Henderson, 1992. Based on data from the 1991 Cooperative Institutional Research Program survey of college freshmen.)
- The NLTS reports 37% of youth with disabilities who had graduated from high school 3 to 5 years earlier had enrolled in postsecondary school as compared to 68% of the general youth population. Enrollment was lowest for youth with learning disabilities, mental retardation, and multiple impairments, while youth with sensory impairments enrolled at about the same rates as youth in general.
- Youth with disabilities were more likely to enroll in college if their parents were involved in their education in high school and expected them to go to college (NLTS).
- Youth with disabilities were about as likely as those in the general population to enroll in postsecondary vocational schools (NLTS).
- Three to five years after dropping out, 27% of dropouts with disabilities had enrolled in a program to earn a high school diploma, 11% had actually earned a diploma, and 5% were still enrolled (NLTS).

Employment

- When they had been out of school 3 to 5 years, 57% of youth with disabilities were competitively employed as compared to 69% of the general population. Employment rates were highest for youth who had learning disabilities or speech impairments, and lowest for those who had multiple disabilities or orthopedic or visual impairments (NLTS).
- The rate of full-time competitive employment for youth with disabilities was 25% when they had been out of high school for 2 years. Three years later, it had risen dramatically for all disabilities to 43%. This rate is similar to the general population's full-time employment rate (46%) (NLTS).
- The wages of students who had been out of high school 3 to 5 years also increased dramatically. The percentage who earned more than $6 per hour rose to 40%. Increases were more frequent for youth who had learning disabilities, serious emotional disturbances, speech impairments, or sensory impairments. However, the median hourly wage for youth with all types of disabilities was just $5.72, less than $12,000 per year for full-time, year-round employment (NLTS).

Residential Status

- In the first 2 years out of high school, 83% of youth with disabilities lived with their parents. Three years later, 55% of this sample lived with their parents (NLTS).
- When youth with disabilities had been out of high school for 3 to 5 years, 37% were living independently—that is, alone, with a spouse or roommate, in a college dormitory, or in military housing not as a dependent. This compares to 60% of the general population. Independent living was much less common among youth with mental retardation, health impairments, or multiple disabilities (NLTS).
- About 4% of youth with disabilities lived in supervised settings, including group homes, institutions for people with disabilities, and residential schools that were not colleges. This did not change over the time of the study. Those who had multiple impairments, particularly those who were deaf/blind, were more likely to live in supervised settings (NLTS).
- Of youth with serious emotional disturbance, 10% were incarcerated or lived in drug treatment centers, shelters for the homeless, or similar settings when they had been out of high school for 3 to 5 years (NLTS).

Societal Involvement

- In 1986–87, 66% of youth in the general population who had been out of high school 3 to 5 years were registered to vote. Of students with disabilities, 51% were registered to vote (NLTS).
- By the time they had been out of high school 3 to 5 years, 15% of young men and 30% of young women with disabilities were married or living with someone of the opposite sex. These rates are similar to those in the general population (NLTS).
- The parenting rate for men was not different from that of the general population (16%), but the rate for young women with disabilities (41%) was much higher than for the general population (28%). The rate for female dropouts, 54%, was even higher. One in five young single women with disabilities were mothers, and about one-third of single mothers with disabilities lived alone with their children (NLTS).

Services

- Parents reported that 30% of out-of-school youth with disabilities did not need adult services. Vocational services were needed by 60% of youth with disabilities who had been out of school for up to 5 years, and more than one-third of them were receiving these services (NLTS).
- Life skills training was reported as a need for 43% of youth with disabilities, and 30% were receiving this type of training (NLTS).

Who is being served in special education? *from page 1*

Projected 1990 Racial/Ethnic Breakdown of Students Receiving Special Education Under Selected Categories

	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	African American	Total Minority	Total White
Percentage of All Students in School	1%	3%	12%	16%	32%	68%
Disability Category						
Mental Retardation	1	1	11	34	47	53
Speech Impairments	1	2	9	16	27	73
Serious Emotional Disturbance	1	1	6	22	29	71
Specific Learning Disabilities	1	1	11	17	30	70

Source: Adapted from OCR, the National and State Summaries of Data from the 1990 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey, 1992.